Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

FES 3 Guidance Notes 2024-25

FES 3 Guidance Notes 2025-26

Issue Date:	27 May 2025
Reference:	SFC/GD/04/2025
Summary:	Guidance notes and code lists for completion of FES 3 individual programme elements data: Academic year 2025-26
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Section 1

Revisions to the FES 3 data collection

Note: *For reasons of data integrity and simplification of updates to FES, new fields (columns) will now be added to the end of the .dat file and obsolete columns will remain but will no longer need to be populated. This has the benefit of maintaining the integrity of current columns in the .dat file while still allowing FES revisions.*

1. Apart from the adjusted FES quarterly return dates there is no change in the 2025-26 FES 3 guidance from 2024-25.

Section 2

Coverage and timing of FES 3 data

2. Full programme element FES 3 details are required for all students included within the FES 2 student returns. FES 3 details are not required for enrolments on full cost recovery courses except; Associate Students and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) (see FES 1 programme code list C, Codes 01-04).

3. The FES 3 return would hold details of each individual programme element for which the student attended at least one learning episode. In cases where the student enrolled but never turned up (see student FES 2, code list J – code 01), it is accepted that there may be the odd enrolment on a course but not on any individual programme elements. It is expected that there will be at least one
FES 3 entry for each FES 2 student record in all other circumstances.

4. It is expected that there would routinely be more than one programme element entry (FES 3) for each student enrolment entry (FES 2). An enrolment on a
full-time FE programme would generate 15 programme element entries if the programme contained 15 separate one Credit units. The number of programme elements may of course be more or less if units were valued at more or less than one Credit each.

5. If a student withdraws from a programme of study before the programme has ended this return should only detail the programme elements for which the student has attended at least once. Those elements contained within the programme of study that start after the withdrawal date would not be included as a FES 3 record. For students that withdraw before the 25% required date of the programme the FES 3 return would still show details of the programme elements for which the student attended before they withdrew including Credits. The FES 3 Credits for each enrolment will not always equal the FES 2 Credits for the same enrolments for these reasons. The FES 3 Credits should reflect the Awarding Body credit value for each unit / module.

6. FES data is due for return to SFC via FES online by 02 October 2026 and covers all enrolments during the entire academic sessions (1 August 2025 to
31 July 2026).

7. The Quarterly return dates are as follows;

    *   1st Quarter – 31 October 2025.

    *   2nd Quarter – 06 February 2026.

    *   3rd Quarter – 26 June 2026.

    *   Final Return – 02 October 2026.

8. SFC requests that, to enable timely monitoring of activity delivered against Credit targets, Colleges submit a minimum of one FES upload per month.

Section 3

Notes and code lists for completion for FES 3

Ref:	Field Name	Description	Length	Position
1	Enrolment number	This is a simple count from the first to the last enrolment to be included within this FES return. A single student will have more than one enrolment number if they enrol on more than one programme. This field will be used to link the FES 2 student and FES 3 programme element data sets.	6	1-6
2	Student matriculation / ID number	The student identifier used within the college. It is expected that a student enrolled on more than one programme will have the same student ID for each enrolment.	20	7-26
3	Superclass code	Superclass code for FES 3 code list A	2	27-28
4	Programme element Credits	Total programme element Credits to three decimal places. Please note, although the total Credits for spanning programmes must only be claimed in the academic year in which the programme ended, the individual programme element Credits should be shown for each element undertaken within the current academic year.	6	29-34

Ref:	Field Name	Description	Length	Position
		The FES 3 Credits should reflect the Awarding Body credit value for each unit / module.		
5	Programme element result	Enter appropriate code from FES 3 code list B	2	35-36
6	SQA Product code	6 digit code – digits 1-4 SQA product code, digits 5-6 level (e.g. customer care A61934)	6	37-42
7	Awarding body	Enter appropriate code from FES 3 code list C	2	43-44
8	"Work experience" programme element indicator	The "Work experience" programme element indicator field is to identify when a course / programme element is regarded as having activity of either work experience, work placement, work simulation (client based), or an employer project. To be counted, the period of "Work experience" **must** be 40 hours duration or more and can be internal or external, supported or unsupported, assessed or non-assessed. *(Please also refer to the "Work experience" course indicator field in FES 1).* 0=course / programme element is **not** "Work experience" related 1=course / programme element is deemed "Work experience"	1	45
9	Programme element title	BLOCK CAPITALS - **All** units / modules / subjects should have a title and, where appropriate, nationally recognised titles should be used.	51	46-96

Code list A

Superclass: Outline of main classes

A: Business/Management/Office Studies	
AA	Business (general)
AB	Management (general)
AC	Public Administration
AD	International Business Studies / Briefing
AE	Enterprises
AF	Management Skills (specific)
AG	Management Planning and Control Systems
AJ	Human Resources Management
AK	Financial Management/Accounting
AL	Financial Services
AM	Call Centres
AY	Administration/Office Skills
AZ	Typing/Shorthand/Secretarial Skills
B: Sales, Marketing and Retailing	
BA	Marketing/Public Relations
BB	Export/Import/European Sales
BC	Retailing/Wholesaling/Distributive Trades
BD	Retailing: Specific Types
BE	Sales Work
BF	E-commerce

C: Information Technology and Information

CA	Information and Communication Technology (general)
CB	Computer Science
CC	Using Software
CD	Information Work/Information Use
CE	Libraries/Librarianship

D: Humanities (History/Archaeology/Religious Studies/Philosophy)

DA	Humanities/General Studies/Combined Studies
DB	History
DC	Archaeology
DD	Religion
DE	Philosophy
DF	Classics

E: Politics/Economics/Law/Social Sciences

EA	Government/Politics
EB	Economics
EC	Law
ED	Social Sciences
EE	Social Studies

F: Area Studies/Cultural Studies/Languages/Literature

FB	Culture/Gender/Folklore
FC	Literature
FJ	Linguistic Studies

FM	Area/Diaspora Studies
FN	Languages

G: Education/Training/Teaching

GA	Education/Training/Learning (Theory)
GB	Teaching/Training
GC	Teaching/Training: specific subjects
GD	Education/School Administration
GF	Careers/Education Guidance Work

H: Family Care/Personal Development/Personal Care and Appearance

HB	Personal and Self Development
HC	Career Change/Access
HD	Basic Skills
HE	Personal Finance/Consumerism/Rights
HF	Parenting/Carers
HG	People with Disabilities: Skills/Facilities
HH	Crisis/Illness Self Help
HJ	Personal Health/Fitness/Appearance
HK	Therapeutic Personal Care
HL	Hair/Personal Care Services

J: Arts and Crafts

JA	Art Studies
JB	Art Techniques/Practical Art
JC	Design (non-industrial)

JD	Museum/Gallery/Conservation Skills and Studies
JE	Collecting/Antiques
JF	Arts and Crafts Leisure/Combined
JG	Decorative Crafts
JH	Decorative Metal Crafts/Jewellery
JK	Fashion/Textiles/Clothing (craft)
JL	Fabric Crafts/Soft Furnishings
JP	Wood Cane and Furniture Crafts
JR	Glass/Ceramics/Stone Crafts

K: Authorship/Photography/Publishing/Media

KA	Communication/Media
KB	Communication Skills
KC	Writing (authorship)
KD	Journalism
KH	Print and Publishing
KJ	Moving Image/Photography/Media Production

L: Performing Arts

LA	Performing Arts (general)
LB	Dance
LC	Theatre and Dramatic Arts
LD	Variety Circus and Modelling
LE	Theatre Production
LF	Music Studies

LG	Music of Specific Kinds/Cultures
LH	Music Performance/Playing
LJ	Musical Instrument Making/Repair
LK	Music Technology/Production

M: Sports, Games and Recreation

MA	Sports Studies/Combined Sports
MB	Air Sports
MC	Water Sports
MD	Athletics Gymnastics and Combat Sports
ME	Wheeled Sports
MF	Winter Sports
MG	Ball and Related Games
MH	Country/Animal Sports
MJ	Indoor Games

N: Catering/Food/Leisure Services/Tourism

NA	Hospitality/Catering
NB	Food/Drink Services
NC	Catering Services
ND	Hospitality Operations
NE	Baking/Dairy/Food and Drink Processing
NF	Cookery
NG	Home Economics
NH	Food Sciences/Technology

NK	Tourism/Travel
NL	Leisure/Sports Facilities Work
NM	Country Leisure Facilities Work
NN	Arts/Culture/Heritage Administration

P: Health Care/Medicine/Health and Safety

PA	Health Care Management/Health Studies
PB	Medical Sciences
PC	Complementary Medicine
PD	Paramedical Services/Supplementary Medicine
PE	Medical Technology/Pharmacology
PF	Dental Services
PG	Ophthalmic Services
PH	Nursing
PJ	Semi-medical/Physical/Psycho/Therapies
PK	Psychology
PL	Health and Safety
PR	Social/Family/Community Work
PS	Counselling/Advice Work/Crisis Support
PT	Caring Skills
PV	First Aid

Q: Environment Protection/Energy/Cleansing/Security

QA	Environmental Protection/Conservation
QB	Energy Economics/Management/ Conservation

QC	Pollution/Pollution Control
QD	Environmental Health/Safety
QE	Cleansing
QG	Funerary Services
QH	Security/Police/Armed Forces
QJ	Fire and Rescue Services

R: Sciences and Mathematics

RA	Science
RB	Mathematics
RC	Physics
RD	Chemistry
RE	Astronomy/Space Science
RF	Earth Sciences
RG	Land and Sea Surveying/Cartography
RH	Life Sciences
RJ	Materials Sciences
RK	Agricultural Science

S: Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care

SA	Agriculture/Horticulture (general)
SC	Crop Protection/Fertilisers/By products
SD	Crop Husbandry
SE	Gardening/Floristry
SF	Amenity Horticulture

SG	Forestry/Timber Production
SH	Animal Husbandry
SJ	Fish Production/Fisheries
SK	Agricultural/Horticultural Engineering/Farm Machinery
SL	Agricultural/Horticultural Maintenance
SM	Rural/Agricultural Business Organisation
SN	Veterinary Services
SP	Pets/Domestic Animal Care
SQ	Land Based Studies

T: Construction and Property (Built Environment)

TA	Built Environment
TC	Property: Surveying/Planning/Development
TD	Building Design/Architecture
TE	Construction
TF	Construction Management
TG	Building/Construction Operations
TH	Building Maintenance/Services
TJ	Interior/Fitting/Decoration
TK	Construction Site Work
TL	Civil Engineering
TM	Structural Engineering

V: Services to Industry and Commerce

VD	Quality and Reliability Management

VE	Industrial Control/Monitoring
VF	Industrial Design/Research and Development
VG	Engineering Services
VH	Facilities Management
VJ	Contracting (Business/Industry)

W: Manufacturing/Production Work

WA	Manufacturing (general)
WB	Manufacturing/Assembly
WC	Instrument Making/Repair
WD	Testing Measurement and Inspection
WE	Chemical Products
WF	Glass/Ceramics/Concretes Manufacture
WG	Polymer Processing
WH	Textiles/Fabrics (industrial)
WJ	Leather Footwear and Fur
WK	Woodworking/Furniture Manufacture
WL	Paper Manufacture
WM	Food/Drink/Tobacco (industrial)

X: Engineering

XA	Engineering/Technology
XD	Metals Working/Finishing
XE	Welding/Joining
XF	Tools/Machining

XH	Mechanical Engineering
XJ	Electrical Engineering
XK	Power/Energy Engineering
XL	Electronic Engineering
XM	Telecommunications
XN	Electrical/Electronic Servicing
XP	Aerospace/Defence Engineering
XQ	Ship and Boat Building/Marine/Offshore Engineering and Maintenance
XR	Road Vehicle Engineering
XS	Vehicle Maintenance/Repair/Servicing
XT	Rail Vehicle Engineering

Y: Oil/Mining/Plastics/Chemicals

YA	Mining/Quarrying/Extraction
YB	Oil and Gas Operations
YC	Chemicals/Materials Engineering
YD	Metallurgy/Metals Production
YE	Polymer Science/Technology

Z: Transport Services

ZM	Logistics
ZN	Purchasing/Procurement and Sourcing
ZP	Distribution
ZQ	Transport Services
ZR	Aviation

ZS	Marine Transport
ZT	Rail Transport
ZV	Road Transport
ZX	Driving/Road Safety

Code list B

Programme element result

9. A result should be recorded for each programme element for which the student has attended at least one learning episode during the current academic year. Elements that span into the next academic year would normally be coded as 09.

Code	Description
01	Enrolled on unit / element but never attended.
05	Transferred to either another programme element and / or another programme in the college.
07	Completed programme element, student assessed but not successful. [1]
08	Completed programme element, student assessed and successful. [1]
09	Continuing onto next academic year (the programme element spans academic years).
11	Withdrawn from programme element.
12	An open workplace assessment element where the result is not yet available.
13	Awarding body has indicated that the element is no longer appropriate or available.
14	Completed programme element, student not assessed as programme element not designed to be assessed. [2]
15	Completed programme element, student not assessed although programme element designed to be assessed. [1]
16	Student deceased.
17	Student on an interim year of a multi-year VQ programme where the unit result is not yet available. [3]

(1) Element result codes (07), (08), (15) **must** only be used for accredited units.
(2) Element result code (14) **must** only be used for non-accredited subjects.
(3) Element result code (17) should be used for VQ units in interim years of a multi-year VQ programme and that may be allocated as hours-only subjects.

10. Rule application for when a student should be withdrawn (code 11) or not successful (code 07) for accredited units;

If a student attempts at least one summative assessment on any individual accredited unit and then withdraws from the unit or course then the unit outcome should be recorded as Outcome 07 – not successful.

Code list C

Awarding body

Code	Description
01	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
02	City & Guilds
03	Higher Education Institute (HEI)
04	College
05	Other
06	No awarding body
07	Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)
08	British Computer Society (BCS)
09	Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD)
10	Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
11	Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland (COSCA)
12	Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB)
13	Engineering & Marine Training Authority (EMTA)
14	Institute of Leadership Management (ILM)
15	National Examination Board in Occupational Safety & Health (NEBOSH)
16	Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)

17	Science, Engineering, Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (SEMTA)
18	Alcohol Focus Scotland
19	ASDAN
20	British Institute of Innkeeping (BIIAB)
21	Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)
22	Council for Administration (CFA)
23	EDEXCEL
25	E-Skills UK
27	Institute of Customer Services
28	Institute of Logistics and Transport in the UK (CILT)UK
29	Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH)
30	International Therapy Examination Council (ITEC)
31	Lloyd's Register
32	Management Standards Centre (MSC)
33	Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE)
34	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
35	Sector Skills Alliance Scotland
36	ServeWise
38	SkillsActive Scotland

39	Early Years National Training Organisation
40	Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI)
41	Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)
42	Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET)
43	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCT)
44	British Deaf Association (BDA)
45	British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing (BINDT)
46	Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS)
47	National Open College Network (NOCN)
48	Excellence, Achievement and Learning Ltd (EAL)
49	College SCQF credit rating body
50	University of the Arts London (UAL)
51	LANTRA
52	Highfield Qualifications
53	Seafish
54	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
55	Royal Yachting Association (RYA)
56	YMCA
57	The Prince's Trust

58	Cisco
59	Cambridge English Exams
60	Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC)
61	Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM)
62	British Plumbing Employers Council (BPEC)
63	British Horse Society (BHS)
64	Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC)

Section 4

Submission of FES 3 returns

Physical characteristics for data files

File format

11. Data should be submitted in a fixed length ASCII file with a '.DAT' file extension.

12. Files should be returned to SFC via the FES Data Portal by 02 October 2026 and covers all programme elements data during the entire academic session
(1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026).

13. The following naming convention should be used for the FES 3 file returned to SFC:

    - C (seven-digit college code number) .DAT e.g. Borders College would ready C5660459.DAT.

Further information

14. Please contact Steve Riddell, Senior Policy / Analysis Officer (Data Collections) for further information, Tel: 0131 313 6685, email: sriddell@sfc.ac.uk and/or datareturns@sfc.ac.uk